

Master Gardeners of Ontario

What's Growing On
MUST BE GROWING ON



Serving Ontario for 25 Years

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Winter, 2011

www.mgoi.ca



Montreal Botanical's Crevice Garden

Coir

Lynne Marie Sullivan, Lake Simcoe South

Coir is the coarse fiber of coconut husks (*Cocos nucifera*), essentially a waste product of fruit production. For centuries, the coarse fibers have been used to make fishing nets, bedding, brooms, twine and geotextiles (erosion control blankets.) Recently, coir has found a new market in horticulture as an effective mulch. It is also used as a hydroponic growing medium where seedlings are started in a mixture of chopped coir and coarse sand.

Coir holds eight-times its weight in water, has a pH between 5.7 and 6.2, and is reported to have a high cation exchange capacity. It holds and releases nutrients over an extended time, decomposing slower than other organic mulches. The red-brown colour makes it a good alternative to wood chips treated with red dye. The coarse texture seems to deter slimy pests making it an excellent mulch for strawberries, hostas, and other plants that are plagued by slugs. Other sources suggest it is equally effective against snails.

Compressed blocks of dry coir are now available in

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The One Hour a Year Garden

Dianne Westlake, Peterborough

With our busy lifestyles and aging bodies, a scree garden may be a sensible alternative to the traditional, formal or cottage garden. Scree gardens are easy to make and once constructed require very little maintenance. In fact, the scree garden could be called the one-hour-a-year garden.



Scree Garden

In nature, scree is usually found in mountainous areas. There, loose rock debris can be found at the base of steep inclines or cliffs, providing a unique growing medium. Weathered rock is broken down by the freeze-thaw cycle resulting in a mass of rocks, stones, gravel and a small amount of silt. Specific nutrients are made available as a result of the chemical and physical changes brought about by the continual weathering. In addition, weather and climate extremes cause "frost heaves" or areas of disturbed soil suitable for new plant growth. This soil movement is also responsible for aeration.

In our gardens, we can attempt to recreate these conditions by building an area of gravel on which creeping plants grow, an area where we try to mimic

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What's Growing On is the newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ontario, Inc. It is published 4 times per year in January, April, July, and October.



Oops There Goes Another Rubber Tree Plant

Norma Evans, Peterborough

My husband and I belong to a church which every once in awhile holds an auction sale. There is a silent and a live auction. On my way to the silent auction tables I passed a very large rubber tree with a sign that said its value was \$100 and I decided it was too large for me.

It did not take long in the live auction for the rubber tree to be dragged up from its corner to where the auctioneer was standing. Being a Master Gardener for over twenty years I was concerned about the move as it seemed a bit rough and the plant seemed to be listing a bit to starboard.

At this point my husband asked if I was going to bid on the plant. I was really surprised that my husband was suggesting that I buy ANOTHER plant, so I said well I would only bid twenty or twenty-five dollars. Unbeknownst to me, it seemed that he had grown up with a rubber tree in the front hall of his house and this explained his interest. Someone bid ten so I bid twenty and there was complete silence. I was the startled owner of said tree.

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the big box stores, although if you ask for it by name the sales clerks will likely give you a blank stare. Look for cubes about 1-foot square which are, unfortunately, wrapped in plastic. Coir's biggest drawback is that the blocks must be broken up. The easiest way is to re-constitute it: place the block in a wheelbarrow and soak it in water for about 30 minutes. You should then be able to pull it apart. Once hydrated, each block produces about a cubic yard of mulch.



Blocks of Dried Coir

Most coir comes from India and Sri Lanka, but before you start calculating the ecological footprint for shipping, note that coir is preferable to sphagnum moss, which is also transported around the world. Coir is not only free of bacteria and fungal spores, but also avoids the environmental damage caused by mining peat.

*Ontario Horticultural Association and
Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc.*



**Working
Together**



Here is the [latest issue OHA's newsletter the Trillium.](#)

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The tree was too large for our car so we left it in the church. Our daughter offered on her day off to collect the tree and bring it home in her larger van. The caretaker loaded the tree into the back seat and we were off. Our daughter carried the tree all through the house to the sunroom where space had been made. It seemed to be listing pretty badly at this point so I suggested that we tie it to the handles on the container, but my daughter decided that a stick would be a better solution.

It was at this point that we looked down at the "dirt" and discovered that this Master Gardener had purchased a very realistic, healthy looking, but very artificial rubber tree. Needless to say, my reputation as a knowledgeable Master Gardener has taken a bit of a drubbing by those aware that the plant was a fake.

*Mystery Plant*

*Do you know this plant?
The answer will be revealed next issue.
Contact editors@mgoi.ca with your guess.*

The Mystery Plant in the Fall Newsletter was honeysuckle with fruits commonly called "Honeyberries". There are a few different species of *Lonicera* that bear edible fruit. *Lonicera eduus var. kamtschatica* and *Lonicera caerulea* are two edible forms. Correct were Gillian Boyd – Ottawa-Carleton, Nancy Seppala – Ottawa-Carleton, Mary Ann Van Berlo – Ottawa, Erika North – Thunder Bay and Christine Halbot – Lindsay and District who also sent [this link](#) with her guess along with the following comment:

Great newsletter, thank-you.....I think the "edible" garden is becoming more & more popular these days with grocery prices on the increase & concerns over pesticide use on food. The CNE horticultural show certainly appeared to be popular this year. I have showed @ the CNE for almost 10 years now & this is the first time that it had almost 50 entries on potatoes where most other shows it was hard pressed to have 10 entries. I always say to people who are complaining about money that growing your own food is rewarding, great exercise & money saving.

Please have more edible & perennial food crops.

One Hour a Year Garden Continued from page 1

alpine conditions. Your scree may be located on a slope, occupy a sloping gully or even a relatively flat area. If the area is level, dig a small ditch around it to help improve drainage.

As with all garden construction, planning is the key. Select a site, mark its boundaries and excavate the area to a depth of at least a foot, preferably more, especially in low ground. Stepping-stones should be installed to provide easy access without disturbing the growing medium. Ensure that these rocks are stable and partially buried. Additional rocks can be installed to add interest or to act as a focal point. An irregular rim of rock can be placed around the edge of the area with some stones being almost flush with the ground and others rising well above it

Because alpine plants require good drainage fill the area a little more than half way with broken stone, shattered bricks or a coarse gravel. This material may be piled a little higher in the spots where you wish the final constructions to be high. The next layer should be a mix consisting of one half by bulk of smaller pieces of crushed stone or gravel, one quarter grit or sand and one quarter soil, but these proportions may be varied somewhat depending upon the character of ingredients. A thorough watering at this point will prevent air pockets and wash the soil and smaller pieces down through the larger pieces. After planting, a top dressing of a decorative stone can be added and replenished if desired but is not necessary.

In mountainous terrain, the length of the growing season is a critical factor for alpine plants. Short growing seasons as well as a nutrient deficiency in the rocky mountain soil causes many alpine plants to take on a stunted appearance. This low profile also helps to limit damage caused by wind.

previously published in the Peterborough Examiner

Wisley's Crevice Garden

You might find these two links to the accounts of the construction of Wisley's Crevice Garden interesting.



[Wisley Crevice Garden Log 19](#)

[Wisley Crevice Garden Log 20](#)

MGs in Action

PowerPoint Presentations

Nine PowerPoint presentations have been posted on the [MGOI web site](#) thanks to the Durham MGs. Most of the presentations have Speaker Notes. All but one has the same format. The first slide also contains information for the presenter, i.e. how long the presentation should take to deliver, suggested handout slides, if hidden slides are used, etc. Please note that since a new slide has been added at the end of each presentation, you may need to adjust the numbers of the handout slides. You will need to Login to access the presentations. All MGs and MGITs can login to the Master Gardeners page using the generic login. If you need assistance with the website, email Linda at lhugli@hotmail.com. For questions about the presentations, contact Beth Cook at

beth_cook@rogers.com

The Toronto MGs have also provided a presentation on the website.

Canada Blooms Tickets.

Once again MGOI will receive a two dollar rebate

from every ticket purchased directly. You don't need a special promo code, or secret password. By clicking on [this link](#), the cyber pixies process your order and will ensure that MGOI receives its share.

MGOI is on Facebook!

Follow us, join us, write a message on our Wall, post photos, become our 'friend'. Find us by clicking the Facebook link at the bottom of the mgoi.ca home page, or enter Master Gardeners of Ontario in the facebook.com Search Box. Check back often for updates on MGOI at Canada Blooms.

A-Z Bouquet

Every year, Lanark County Master Gardeners do a fun project where we all grow something in a type—Squash, Dried Beans, different types of Geraniums. This year, Renai Rennick arrived with a bag of Scrabble tiles and we all drew one or two. At our September meeting, we all brought our plants that represented that letter and created an A-Z Bouquet. Only 1 plant was brought to represent 2 letters – *Asclepias tuberosa* and Butterfly Weed. We all dreaded the X but Gerda Franssen came through with *Xanthium* (Cockleburs) and Carol Kenward who brought an Ultra Tomato for the U.

Milestones

New MGITs

Durham – Jon Chen

Guelph and Wellington County – Erica Gammage, Kathy Granger, Lianne Krane, Julie Kron, Sharon Leggett, Gryphon Loubier, Paul Mitchell, Joanne Morrison, Dana Rodgers, Debbie Thompson and Ann Welland

Thunder Bay – Tracy Rowe joined in November, 2010 and has recently written the Certification Exam

New MGs

Guelph and Wellington County – Inger Knudsen and Robert Pavlis

Northumberland – Judy Kaufmann

Ottawa-Carleton – Catherine Disley-Engler

Peterborough – Cathy Fraser, Joanne Windrem

Simcoe County – Cherin Harris-Tuck

Thunder Bay – Laurie Benoit

5 Years

Durham – Kim Pileggi, Gini Sage

Guelph and Wellington County – Meg Graham, Denise Jupp, Ruth Anne Kleber-Lyon, Marlene Murray, Ann Stallman

Northumberland – Mark Gordon

Simcoe County – Rhona DesRoches, Tom McCavour, Kevin van Andel, Charlotte Vorstermans

Thunder Bay – Hazel McLean, Gwen Third

10 Years

Halton – Roberta Roberts

Northumberland – Arlene Foster

Simcoe County – Marilyn Nielsen, Linda Peacock

Thunder Bay – Linda Rintamaki

15 Years

Lanark County – Renai Rennick

Ottawa-Carleton – Gaston Tessier

Stratford – Kim Brodhagen, Tom Ryan, Ruth Seyffert

20 Years

Stratford – Eric Hewison

Thunder Bay – Ralph Bullough, Aileen Dampier, Marie Hynna, Susan Jaward

25 years

Ottawa-Carleton – Polly McColl, Joan McNab, Fran Dennett, Lee Boltwood, Founding members of Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Puerto Vallarta Botanical Garden, Mexico

Linda Clay, Guelph

Often called a diamond in the rough, this remarkable 5 year old garden is an educational research center and a pleasure garden. The garden is a 20 acre tropical dry forest ecosystem in a beautiful, mountainous location. While it is a young garden, it has over 3000 species of plants, including palms, roses, tree ferns, agave, cactus,



native oak, mountain pine, mahogany trees and a remarkable native orchid collection.

While you may be disappointed by the absence of typical botanical garden sophistication, beauty still abounds. Enjoy the plants, the tropical mountain paths, the crystal clear river, (yes you can swim there) the magnificent colours, the opportunity for a photo safari or great bird watching.

When you are ready for a rest, there is a remarkably good restaurant with spectacular views, and cool breezes. Reached by car or local bus, the garden is 12 miles south of Puerto Vallarta, on Hwy 200.

<http://www.vallartabotanicalgardensac.org/>

Events

January 24 at 8.00 p.m. at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 3200 Bayview Avenue. The North York Garden Club featuring the topic How and What to Plant for a Four Season Garden by Sheridan Nurseries. Contact Pat Cappelli at 647-296-0402 or patcappelli@yahoo.ca or www.gardenontario.org/site.php/northyork

February 26 –10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Seedy Saturday at Unitarian Congregation Church – 84 South Service Road (QEW and Highway 10) Mississauga MGs will provide gardening advice as well as free gardening workshops.

February 27, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Guelph and Wellington County presents A Day in the Garden at the Victoria East Golf Club, Guelph Ontario Theme "Gardening with a Purpose" – Speakers: Robert Pavlis – "Building Waterfalls and Ponds;" Sean Fox – "Pruning Basics" and Martha Gay Scroggins – "Growing Your Own Vegetables." Cost \$40.00 includes lunch. Advance Registration required. Contact lynnlillespie@rogers.com

March 3 – 6 – Stratford Garden Festival at Stratford Rotary Complex, 353 McCarthy Road, Stratford. Tickets are \$9.00 per person. Children 12 and under free. Visit the Stratford MG advice clinic. www.stratfordgardenfestival.com

March 16 - 20 - Canada Blooms at Direct Energy Centre. www.canadablooms.com

March 19 at 10:00 a.m. – London Middlesex Master Gardeners presents their third annual Come Grow With Us - Seedy Saturday. Held in the newly renovated Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre at 656 Elizabeth Street London, located three blocks south of Oxford Street and three blocks east of Adelaide Street. We will be having a notable guest speaker, demonstrations and workshops by members of London Middlesex Master Gardeners and a help desk. As in past years there will be numerous trade vendors, including seed suppliers, garden centres and nurser-

ies. We also expect non-profit organizations with connections to the environment to be there.

Come and meet lots of fellow Master Gardeners and celebrate the coming of spring. The cost to adults is \$5.00 – children are free. The facility is wheel chair accessible and there is no charge for parking. We can be reached at our website www.londonmiddlesexmastergardeners.com

March 31 – April 3 – Successful Gardening and Spring Home Show – at International Exhibition Place, Airport Road. Mississauga MGs will be providing gardening advice.

April 8, 9, 10 - Peterborough Garden Show sponsored by Master Gardeners and Peterborough Hort. Soc. Evinrude Centre, www.peterboroughgardens.ca

April 9 – Spring Gardening Workshops offered on "Gardening Basics" (10:00 a.m.– 12:00 p.m.) and "Garden Plants, Shrubs and Trees" (1:30 p.m.- 3:30 p.m.), at the Riverwood Conservancy, MacEwan House. \$25.00 for one session or \$35.00 for both. For registration details: www.mgmississauga.mgoi.ca/HOME.php

April 21 at 7:30 pm. – Muskoka Parry Sound Master Gardeners present Lorraine Johnson "Adventures in Urban Food Gardening" – at Algonquin Theatre in Huntsville. Tickets \$15.00 at the door or online www.algonquintheatre.ca

July 16 - 17 - The Fourth Annual M.G.O.I. Summer Workshop will be held at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens and School of Horticulture. The programme topics will be pruning shrubs and vines, some soil science and water gardens. Complete information will be posted on the M.G.O.I. website by the end of February. Contact information for the Summer Workshop – June Streadwick at streadwick@sympatico.ca or 905-934-6137

October 11-14 - International MG Conference in Charleston West Virginia <http://wvu.edu/imgc2011>

October 13 -24 – Italian Garden Tour with Marjorie Harris – by Travel Specifics. www.travelspecifics.com . Contact Linda 888-823-5849

Unfortunately, in the original version of the newsletter, the following section of the Milestones was left out.

Sorry - Editors

Milestones (continued)

In Memorium

Maxine Vakaras passed away October 23, 2010. Maxine had been a member for more than 10 years, starting with the Haldimand-Dunnville group and more recently with the Norfolk County Master Gardeners (since 2002). Maxine was known for her love and great knowledge of perennials and Carolinian trees.

Retired

Lake Simcoe South – Ken Smith has retired after nearly 18 years of service.

Norfolk County – After more than 15 years as a Master Gardener, Ina Wesseling has decided to hang up her trowel and has resigned. She had been a member of the Norfolk group since 2002 and was formerly a member of the Brantford Master Gardeners. Ina has decided to pursue other interests and her vast knowledge of plants and trees will be missed.

Ottawa-Carleton – Bob Duff retired after 11 years of service.

Welcome

Guelph and Wellington County – Judith Renaud, who was a founding member of GWCMG, has returned after several years away. Marcia Barron has transferred to GWCMG from Etobicoke. Welcome Judith and Marcia!

Peterborough is pleased to welcome Kerry Hackett who has transferred from Stratford.

New Coordinator

Norfolk is pleased to announce that Mary Dillon has accepted the position of Coordinator

Guelph and Wellington County Master Gardeners have forged a new partnership with The Arboretum at the University of Guelph. Our monthly meetings will now be held at the Arboretum Centre and we hope to have some joint events. GWCMG previously met at the Guelph Turfgrass Centre and we will continue to partner with GTI.